

MedlinePlus Evaluating Internet Health Information: A Tutorial

From the National Library of Medicine

Revised: March 2018

Chapters:

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Provider and Purpose](#)
3. [Information Quality](#)
4. [Privacy](#)
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Introduction

Welcome to the Evaluating Internet Health Information tutorial from the National Library of Medicine.

This tutorial will teach you how to evaluate health information found on the internet.

Using the internet to find health information is like going on a treasure hunt. You could find some real gems, but you could also end up in some strange and dangerous places!

So how can you tell if a Web site is reliable? There are a few quick steps you can take to check out a Web site. Let's consider the clues to look for when checking out Web sites.

- Who runs the site?
- Why have they created the site?
- What do they want from you?
- Who is paying for the site? Does the site's information favor the sponsor?
- Is the information reviewed by experts?
- Where did the information come from?
- Does the site make unbelievable claims?
- Is it up-to-date?
- Do "they" want your personal information? What will "they" do with it

Introduction

Answering each of these questions gives you clues about the quality of the information on the site. You can usually find the answers on the main page or the "About Us" page of a Web site. Site maps can also be helpful.

Let's say your doctor just told you that you have high cholesterol. You want to learn more about it before your next doctor's appointment, and you have started with the Internet.

Let's say that you found these two Web sites. (They are not real sites). Anyone can put up a Web page. You want a trusted source. First, find out who is running the site.



Institute for a Healthier Heart
"Helping families live healthier lives since 2015"

Healthy Living | Shop 

Blood Pressure Cholesterol Heart Disease Children & Heart Health

Latest Heart News

-  Treating Sleep Apnea Reduces Heart Disease Deaths
[Read more >>](#)
-  Low-Level Jobs Linked with Faster, Less Variable Heart Rates - and Higher Heart Risk
-  Social Connections: Could Heartwarming Be...
-  Enlarged Waist + Elevated Triglycerides = Higher Risks for Women

Learn how a **revolutionary new drug** can help

About this Site

Physicians Academy for Better Health

Diseases & Conditions Diet & Nutrition Exercise Medication & Treatment



Genetics may explain why some people can lower their cholesterol by altering their diet and exercise habits while others who take similar measures do not see significant decreases.

A study comparing the cholesterol levels of twins with starkly different body types and exercise habits found that the twins showed the same response to high-fat or low-fat diets. This suggests that genetics may determine how a person's cholesterol responds to dietary or lifestyle changes. The study was in the July 2015 issue of the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

What the Numbers Mean

Cholesterol levels are measured in milligrams (mg) of cholesterol per deciliter (dl) of blood.

Total Cholesterol Level	Category
Less than 200 mg/dL	Desirable
200-239 mg/dL	Borderline High
240 mg/dL and above	High

Source: NHLBI

Sign up for our newsletter.

ADVERTISEMENT
 Regular exercise is important for people of all ages.
 This exercise program shows you how to start and stick with a program of stretching, balance, and strength-training.



About Us Privacy Policy Site Map Email Us Physicians Academy for Better Health
 Information Last Reviewed 1/15/2017 2309 Anystreet, Anytown, USA | 555-USA-PABH

These two examples of websites demonstrate how pages can potentially be arranged.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Provider and Purpose—Part 1 of 6

In our first example site, the website name is the Physicians Academy for Better Health. But you can't go by the name alone. You need more information about who created the site and why.

Look for the 'About' or 'About Us' link. This should be your first stop in the search for clues. It should say who is running the Web site, and why.

Physicians Academy for Better Health

Diseases & Conditions
Diet & Nutrition
Exercise
Medication & Treatment

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About Us

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2309 Anystreet, Anytown, USA | 555-USA-PABH

Potentially there can be a link either toward the bottom or even toward the upper area of the page where other site related information is located as shown in this example.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Provider and Purpose—Part 1 of 6

From our example for the Physicians Academy for Better Health website, we learn from their 'About Us' page that the organization's mission is to 'educate the public on disease prevention and healthy living.'

Physicians Academy for Better Health

[Diseases & Conditions](#) [Diet & Nutrition](#) [Exercise](#) [Medication & Treatment](#)

About Us

"Our mission is to educate the public on disease prevention and healthy living. We conduct research and provide information that empowers health care consumers to protect their health."

Rheumatologist Western Hospital	Hematologist/Oncologist Will University Affiliates	Gastroenterologist The Gastroenterology Group	Psychiatrist Capital Medical Group
Dennis Davis, M.D. Pediatrician Pediatric Medical Center	Alice Jones, M.S., LCSW Social Worker Wellness and Health Center	Bob Nelson, M.D. Cardiologist National Heart Center	Stewart Williams, M.S., P.T. Physical Therapist Doctors Hospital
Jane Doe, M.D. Cardiologist United Heart Clinics	Susan Martin, M.D. Obstetrician/Gynecologist Women's Hospital	John Smith, R.N. Nurse County Hospital	Bob Wilson, R.D. Dietitian Health Group of Gotham

Editorial Policy

Delivering cutting-edge, reliable information is our top priority. Our board of directors reviews the material that we disseminate on this site. We are committed to providing accurate, unbiased, research-based information. We regularly review the material on our site to ensure that it is current. We will not accept advertising that conflicts with our mission. Any advertising on our site will be labeled so that it is separated from medical content.

The information on this Web site is not a substitute for medical advice. Please consult with your physician before making any changes to your health regime.

[About Us](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Site Map](#) [Email Us](#) **Physicians Academy for Better Health**
2309 Anystreet, Anytown, USA | 555-USA-PABH

Information Last Reviewed 1/15/2017

This example shows a mission statement on the About Us page.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Provider and Purpose—Part 2 of 6

From our example for the Physicians Academy for Better Health website, we learn this site is run by health care professionals and their area of expertise, including those who specialize in heart health. This is important when you want to receive information from experts on heart-related subjects.

Physicians Academy for Better Health

[Diseases & Conditions](#) [Diet & Nutrition](#) [Exercise](#) [Medication & Treatment](#)

About Us

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Board of Directors

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As shown in this example, information on staff or information sources allow you to evaluate quality of the site's information.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Provider and Purpose—Part 2 of 6

Next, check to see if there is a way to contact the organization running the site. This site provides an e-mail address, a mailing address, and a phone number.

Physicians Academy for Better Health

Diseases & Conditions
Diet & Nutrition
Exercise
Medication & Treatment

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[About Us](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Site](#)

Information Last Reviewed 1/15/2017

Email Us

Physicians Academy for Better Health

2309 Anystreet, Anytown, USA | 555-USA-PABH

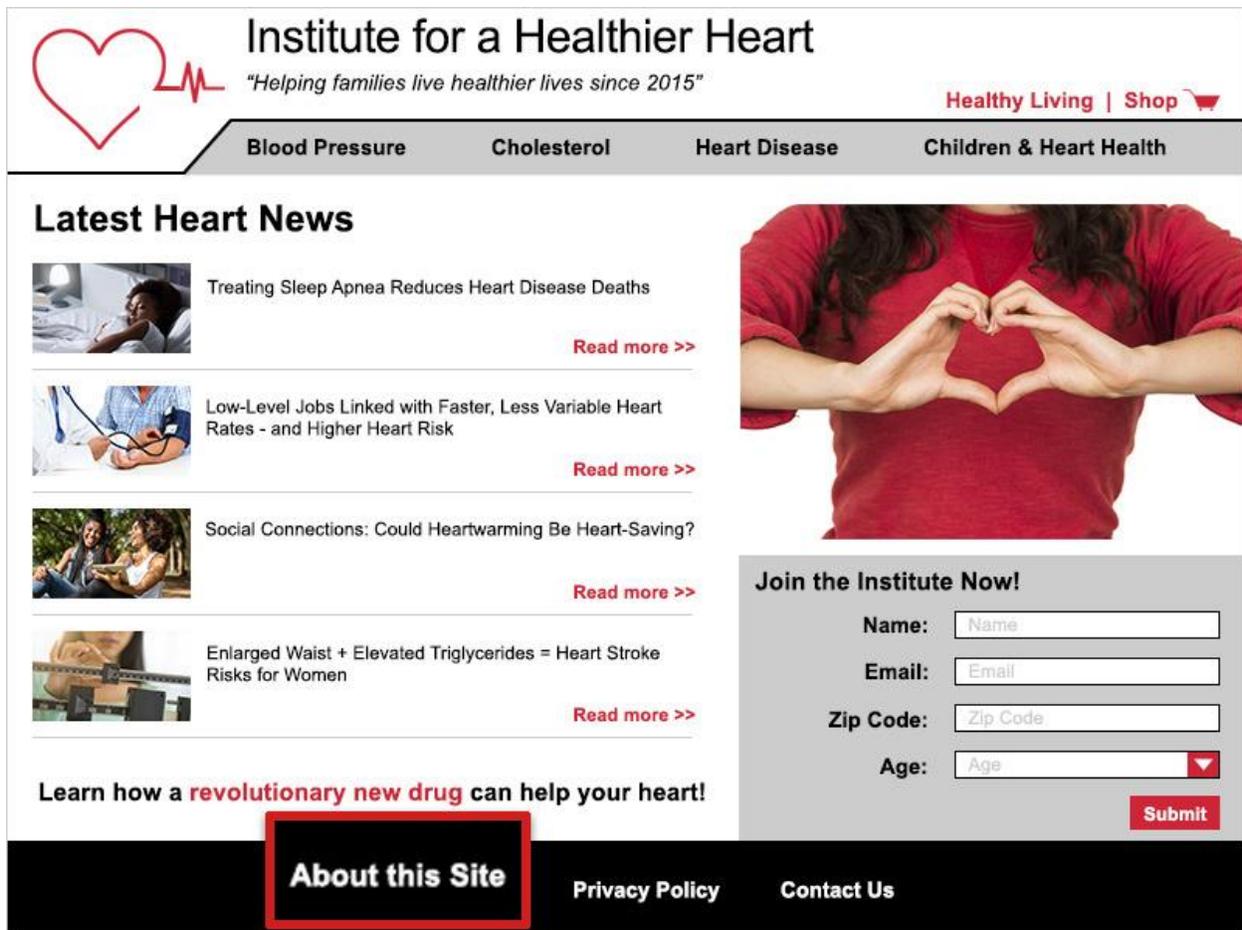
In this example, the contact information is located in the footer area of the website. Other sites may have a dedicated contact us web page with their contact information or even a request form.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Provider and Purpose—Part 3 of 6

Now let's go to the other site and look for the same clues.

The Institute for a Healthier Heart runs this Web site.

Here is an "About this Site" link.



Institute for a Healthier Heart
"Helping families live healthier lives since 2015"

Healthy Living | Shop

Blood Pressure Cholesterol Heart Disease Children & Heart Health

Latest Heart News

-  Treating Sleep Apnea Reduces Heart Disease Deaths
[Read more >>](#)
-  Low-Level Jobs Linked with Faster, Less Variable Heart Rates - and Higher Heart Risk
[Read more >>](#)
-  Social Connections: Could Heartwarming Be Heart-Saving?
[Read more >>](#)
-  Enlarged Waist + Elevated Triglycerides = Heart Stroke Risks for Women
[Read more >>](#)

Learn how a **revolutionary new drug** can help your heart!

Join the Institute Now!

Name:

Email:

Zip Code:

Age:

Submit

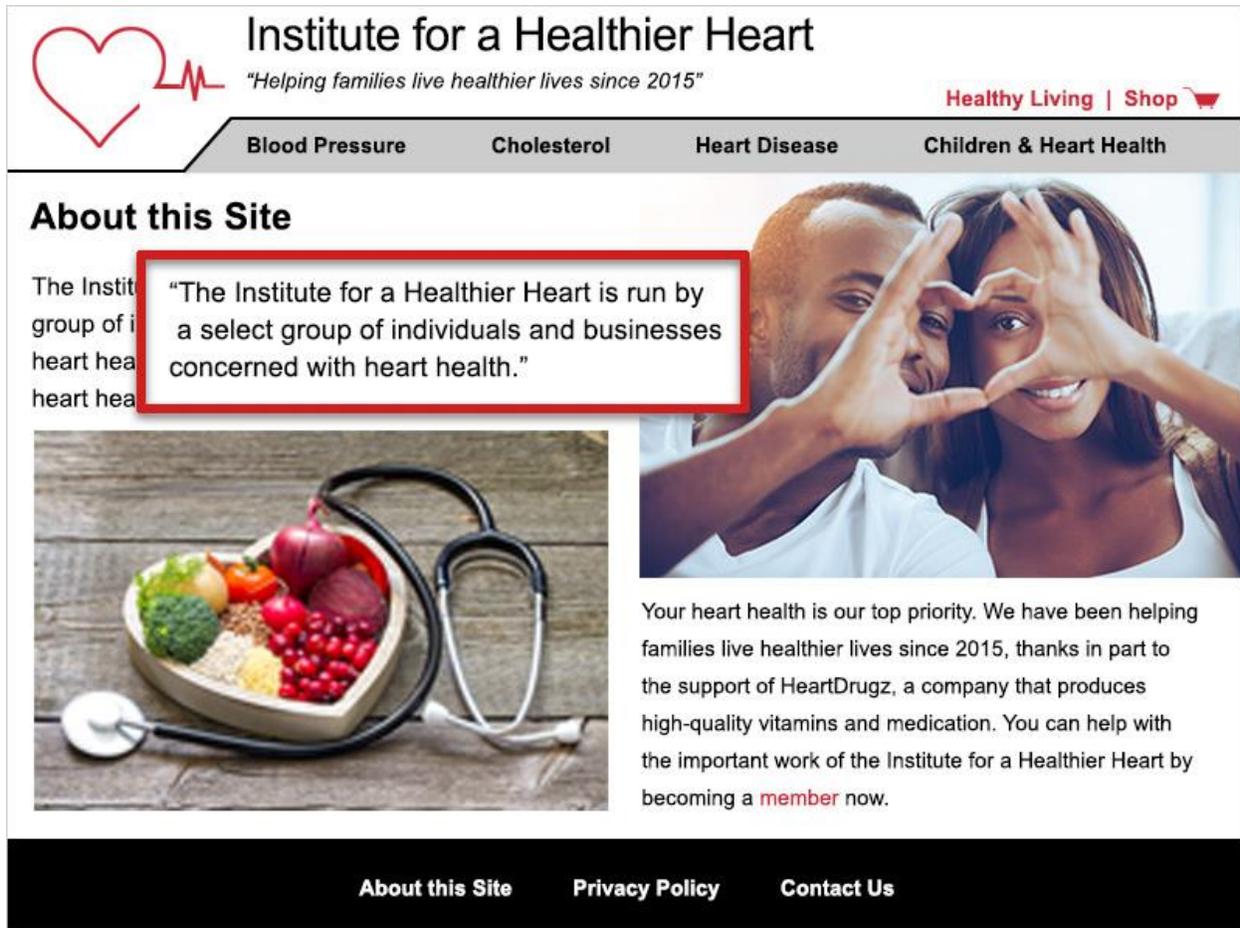
About this Site Privacy Policy Contact Us

This example shows that not every site locates or names their About page exactly the same.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Provider and Purpose—Part 3 of 6

This page says that the Institute consists of "individuals and businesses concerned with heart health."

Who are these individuals? Who are these businesses? It does not say. Sometimes missing pieces of information can be important clues!



Institute for a Healthier Heart
"Helping families live healthier lives since 2015"

Healthy Living | Shop

Blood Pressure Cholesterol Heart Disease Children & Heart Health

About this Site

The Institute for a Healthier Heart is a group of individuals and businesses concerned with heart health.

"The Institute for a Healthier Heart is run by a select group of individuals and businesses concerned with heart health."

Your heart health is our top priority. We have been helping families live healthier lives since 2015, thanks in part to the support of HeartDrugz, a company that produces high-quality vitamins and medication. You can help with the important work of the Institute for a Healthier Heart by becoming a [member](#) now.

[About this Site](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Contact Us](#)

This example shows that this site's sources are not specified.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Provider and Purpose—Part 4 of 6

The Institute's mission is "to provide the public with heart health information and to offer related services."

Are these services free? The unspoken purpose might be to sell you something.

If you keep reading, you'll find it says that a company that makes vitamins and medications helps to sponsor the site.

The site might favor that particular company and its products.

Institute for a Healthier Heart
"Helping families live healthier lives since 2015"

Healthy Living | Shop

Blood Pressure Cholesterol Heart Disease Children & Heart Health

About this Site

The Institute for a Healthier Heart is run by a select group of health professionals.

"Our mission is to provide the public with heart health information and to offer related services."

Your heart health is our top priority. We have been helping families live healthier lives since 2015, thanks in part to

"...the support of HeartDrugz, a company that produces high-quality vitamins and medication."

becoming a [member](#) now.

About this Site Privacy Policy Contact Us

This example shows that it is helpful to read the information about the site.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Provider and Purpose—Part 4 of 6

What about contact information? There is a 'Contact Us' link, but no other contact information is provided.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Institute for a Healthier Heart. At the top left is a logo featuring a heart and an ECG line. The main header includes the text "Institute for a Healthier Heart" and the tagline "Helping families live healthier lives since 2015". To the right of the header is a "Healthy Living | Shop" link with a shopping cart icon. Below the header is a navigation bar with four categories: "Blood Pressure", "Cholesterol", "Heart Disease", and "Children & Heart Health".

The main content area is titled "Latest Heart News" and features four news items, each with a small image and a "Read more >>" link:

- Treating Sleep Apnea Reduces Heart Disease Deaths** (Image: A person sleeping in a bed with a CPAP machine.)
- Low-Level Jobs Linked with Faster, Less Variable Heart Rates - and Higher Heart Risk** (Image: A doctor examining a patient's heart rate.)
- Social Connections: Could Heartwarming Be Heart-Saving?** (Image: A group of people sitting together outdoors.)
- Enlarged Waist + Elevated Triglycerides = Heart Stroke Risks for Women** (Image: A person's waist being measured by a tape measure.)

To the right of the news items is a large image of a woman in a red shirt forming a heart shape with her hands. Below this image is a "Join the Institute Now!" section with a form containing the following fields:

- Name:**
- Email:**
- Zip Code:**
- Age:** (with a dropdown arrow)

A red "Submit" button is located at the bottom right of the form. Below the form is a black footer bar with three links: "About this Site", "Privacy Policy", and "Contact Us". The "Contact Us" link is highlighted with a red rectangular box.

This example shows that contact information may be harder to find and not as clearly provided as other sites.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Provider and Purpose—Part 5 of 6

On the example website for the Institute for a Healthier Heart, there is a link to an online shop that allows visitors to purchase products.

A site's main purpose may be to sell you something and not just to offer information.

But the site may not explain this directly. You need to investigate!

The screenshot shows the website for the Institute for a Healthier Heart. The header includes a heart logo with an ECG line, the text "Institute for a Healthier Heart" and the tagline "Helping families live healthier lives since 2015". A navigation menu includes "Blood Pressure", "Cholesterol", "Heart Disease", and "Children & Heart Health". A "Shop" button with a shopping cart icon is highlighted with a red box. The main content area is titled "Latest Heart News" and lists four articles with "Read more >>" links. A large image of a person in a red shirt forming a heart shape is on the right. Below it is a "Join the Institute Now!" form with fields for Name, Email, Zip Code, and Age, and a "Submit" button. The footer contains links for "About this Site", "Privacy Policy", and "Contact Us".

This example shows that a site with a shopping cart as a main item on the site may have a higher priority to sell you something.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Provider and Purpose—Part 5 of 6

The online store includes items from the drug company that funds the site. Keep this in mind as you browse the site.

The clue suggests that the site might have a preference for the drug company or its products.

Institute for a Healthier Heart
"Helping families live healthier lives since 2015"

Healthy Living | Shop

Blood Pressure Cholesterol Heart Disease Children & Heart Health

Shopping Cart

[Checkout](#)



HeartDrugz vitamins can help keep you strong and prevent disease.

Buy Now \$35.00



This cookbook of heart-healthy recipes will make your stomach happy as well.

Buy Now \$25.00



Keep track of doctor appointments and other important medical information with this health journal. A great gift for the ones you love.

Buy Now \$25.00

[About this Site](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Contact Us](#)

Example of a site with a shopping cart and the type of health-related products potentially offered.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Provider and Purpose—Part 6 of 6

Check to see if there are advertisements on the sites. If so, can you tell the ads from the health information?

Both of these sites have advertisements.

On the Physicians Academy page, the ad is clearly labeled as an advertisement.

You can easily tell it apart from the content on the page.

Physicians Academy for Better Health

Diseases & Conditions
Diet & Nutrition
Exercise
Medication & Treatment

Genetics may explain why some people can lower their cholesterol by altering their diet and exercise habits while others who take similar measures do not see significant decreases.

A study comparing the cholesterol levels of twins with starkly different body types and exercise habits found that the twins showed the same response to high-fat or low-fat diets. This suggests that genetics may determine how a person's cholesterol responds to dietary or lifestyle changes. The study was in the July 2015 issue of the [American Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#).

What the Numbers Mean

Cholesterol levels are measured in milligrams (mg) of cholesterol per deciliter (dl) of blood.

Total Cholesterol Level	Category
Less than 200 mg/dL	Desirable
200-239 mg/dL	Borderline High
240 mg/dL and above	High

Source: NHLBI



ADVERTISEMENT

Regular exercise is important for people of all ages.

This exercise program shows you how to start and stick with a program of stretching, balance, and strength-training.



[About Us](#)
[Privacy Policy](#)
[Site Map](#)
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This example shows what an advertisement may look like, particularly when they are labeled as advertisement.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Provider and Purpose—Part 6 of 6

On the other site, this advertisement is not identified as an ad.

It is hard to tell the difference between the ad and the content. This may be done to encourage you to buy something.

The screenshot shows the website for the Institute for a Healthier Heart. The header includes the logo (a heart with a pulse line), the name "Institute for a Healthier Heart", the tagline "Helping families live healthier lives since 2015", and a "Healthy Living | Shop" link with a shopping cart icon. A navigation bar below the header lists "Blood Pressure", "Cholesterol", "Heart Disease", and "Children & Heart Health".

The main content area is titled "Latest Heart News" and features four news items, each with a small image, a title, and a "Read more >>" link:

- Treating Sleep Apnea Reduces Heart Disease Deaths** (Image: person sleeping)
- Low-Level Jobs Linked with Faster, Less Variable Heart Rates - and Higher Heart Risk** (Image: doctor with stethoscope)
- Social Connections: Could Heartwarming Be Heart-Saving?** (Image: two people talking)
- Enlarged Waist + Elevated Triglycerides = Heart Stroke Risks for Women** (Image: person at a scale)

To the right of the news items is a large image of a person in a red shirt forming a heart shape with their hands. Below this image is a "Join the Institute Now!" sign-up form with fields for Name, Email, Zip Code, and Age, and a "Submit" button.

A red-bordered box highlights an advertisement at the bottom of the news section: "Learn how a **revolutionary new drug** can help your heart!".

The footer contains links for "About this Site", "Privacy Policy", and "Contact Us".

In this example where the ad is not identified, you need to decide if they are promoting a product instead of actual health information.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Information Quality—Part 1 of 4

You now have some clues about who is publishing each site and why. But how can you tell if the information is high-quality? Look at where the information comes from or who writes it.

Phrases like "editorial board," "selection policy," or "review process" can point you in the right direction. Let's see if these clues are provided on each Web site.

Let's go back to the "About Us" page of the Physicians Academy for Better Health Web site. The Board of Directors reviews all medical information before it is posted on the Web site. We learned earlier that they are trained medical professionals, usually M.D.s. They only approve information that meets their rules for quality.

Physicians Academy for Better Health

[Diseases & Conditions](#) [Diet & Nutrition](#) [Exercise](#) [Medication & Treatment](#)

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Information Last Reviewed 1/15/2017

This example demonstrates a clearly stated policy for the quality of their information and priorities.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Information Quality—Part 1 of 4

Let's see what information we can find on our other example website for the Institute for a Healthier Heart.

You know that a "group of individuals and businesses" is running this site. But you don't know who these individuals are, or if they are medical experts.

Institute for a Healthier Heart
"Helping families live healthier lives since 2015"

Healthy Living | Shop

Blood Pressure Cholesterol Heart Disease Children & Heart Health

About this Site

The Institute for a Healthier Heart is run by a select group of individuals and businesses concerned with heart health.

Your heart health is our top priority. We have been helping families live healthier lives since 2015, thanks in part to the support of HeartDrugz, a company that produces high-quality vitamins and medication. You can help with the important work of the Institute for a Healthier Heart by becoming a **member** now.

About this Site Privacy Policy Contact Us

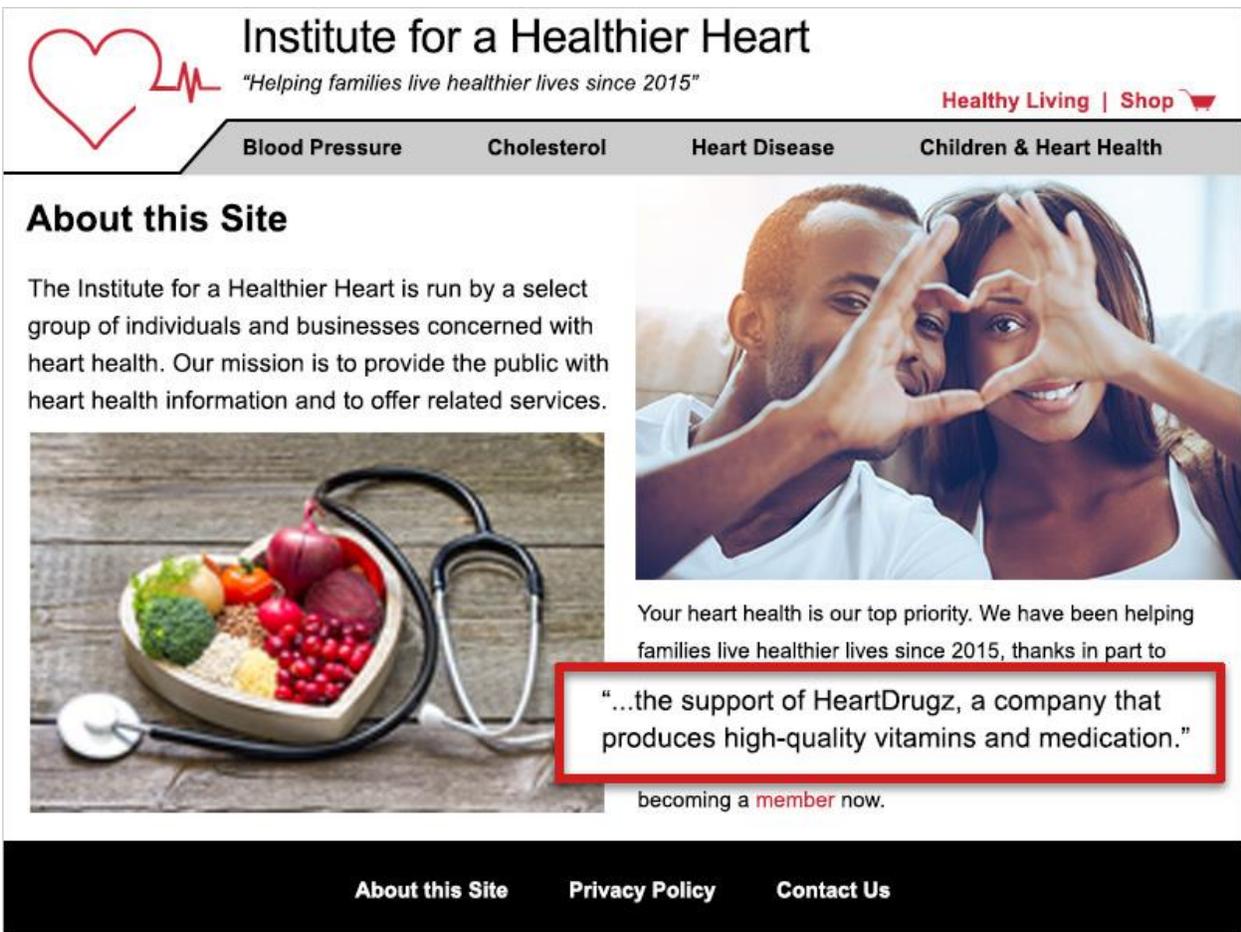
This example demonstrates how unclear a website's sources can be and how unclear the quality of their information can be.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Information Quality—Part 2 of 4

You learned from earlier clues that a drug company sponsors the site. It is possible that this group writes information for the Web site in order to promote the company and its products.

Even if experts review the information that is posted on a site, you should continue to ask questions. Look for hints about where the information came from. Good sites should rely on medical research, not opinion.

It should be clear who wrote the content. Check to see if the original sources of the data and research are listed.



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Healthy Living | Shop

Blood Pressure Cholesterol Heart Disease Children & Heart Health

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"...the support of HeartDrugz, a company that produces high-quality vitamins and medication."

becoming a **member** now.

About this Site Privacy Policy Contact Us

This example says the site is getting support from a drug company demonstrating why reviewing the site information is important.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Information Quality—Part 3 of 4

This site provides some background data and identifies the source. Information written by others is clearly labeled.

Physicians Academy for Better Health

Diseases & Conditions
Diet & Nutrition
Exercise
Medication & Treatment

Genetics may explain why some people can lower their cholesterol by altering their diet and exercise habits while others who take similar measures do not see significant decreases.

A study comparing the cholesterol levels of twins with starkly different body types and exercise habits found that the twins showed the same response to high-fat or low-fat diets. This suggests that genetics may determine how a person's cholesterol

July 2015 issue of the [American Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#).

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Source: [NHLBI](#)

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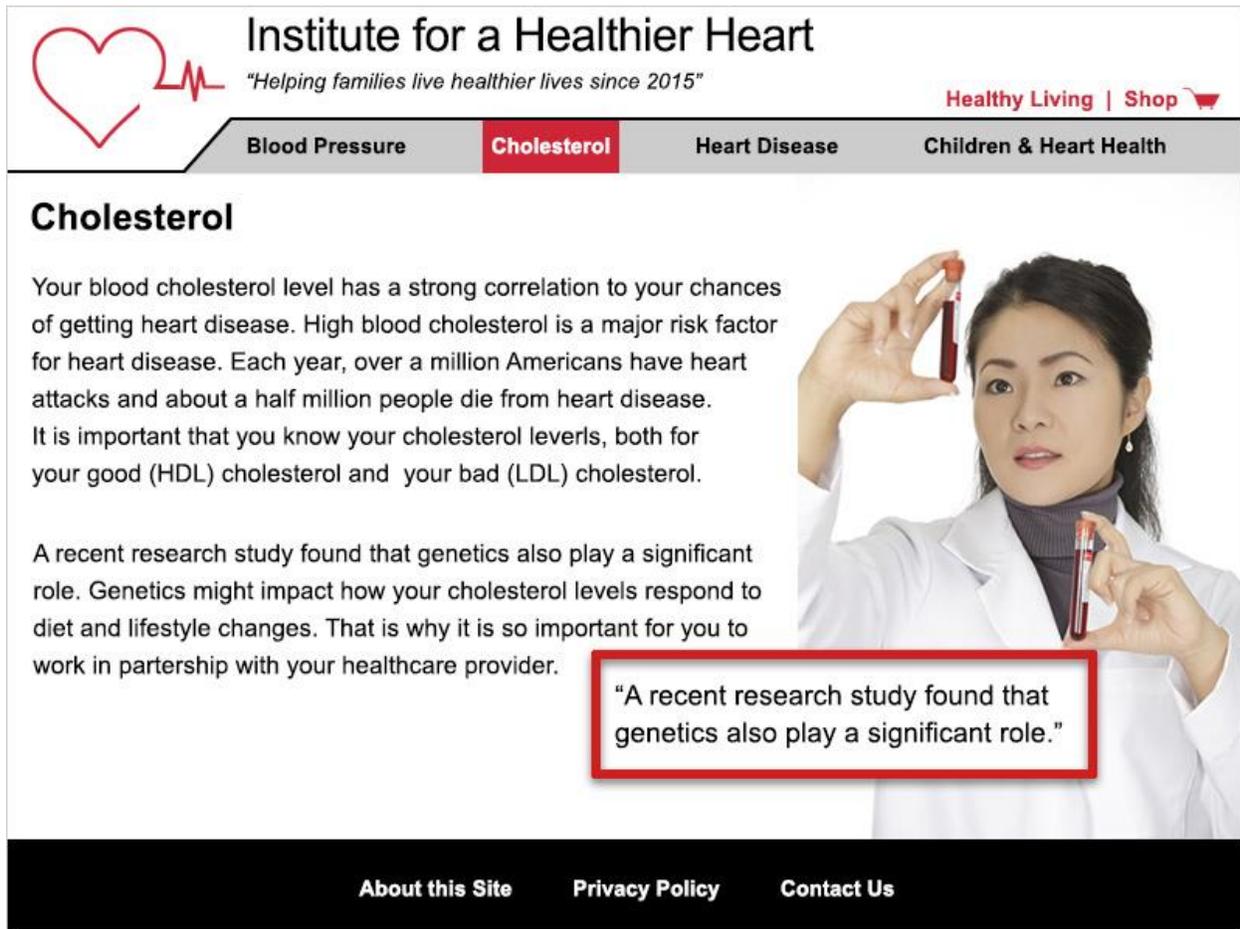
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Information Last Reviewed 1/15/2017

The Physicians Academy for Better Health site demonstrates how a source is noted for your reference and even provide a link to the source.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Information Quality—Part 3 of 4

On the other Web site, we see a page that mentions a research study. Yet there are no details about who conducted the study, or when it was done. You have no way of verifying their information.



Institute for a Healthier Heart
"Helping families live healthier lives since 2015"

Healthy Living | Shop

Blood Pressure **Cholesterol** Heart Disease Children & Heart Health

Cholesterol

Your blood cholesterol level has a strong correlation to your chances of getting heart disease. High blood cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart disease. Each year, over a million Americans have heart attacks and about a half million people die from heart disease. It is important that you know your cholesterol levels, both for your good (HDL) cholesterol and your bad (LDL) cholesterol.

A recent research study found that genetics also play a significant role. Genetics might impact how your cholesterol levels respond to diet and lifestyle changes. That is why it is so important for you to work in partnership with your healthcare provider.

"A recent research study found that genetics also play a significant role."

About this Site Privacy Policy Contact Us

The Institute for a Healthier Heart site makes only a vague reference to a 'recent research study'.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Information Quality—Part 4 of 4

Here are some other hints: Look at the general tone of the information. Is it too emotional? Does it sound too good to be true? Be cautious about sites that make unbelievable claims or promote "miracle cures." Neither of these sites present information this way.

Next, check to see if the information is current. Out-of-date information can be hazardous to your health. It may not reflect the latest research or treatments. Look for some sign that the site is reviewed and updated regularly. Here is an important clue. The information on this site was reviewed recently.

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ADVERTISEMENT

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This exercise program shows you how to start and stick with a program of stretching, balance, and strength-training.



Information Last Reviewed 1/15/2017

[Email Us](#)

Physicians Academy for Better Health
2309 Anystreet, Anytown, USA | 555-USA-PABH

The example on the Physicians Academy for Better Health site states the date of the review.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Information Quality—Part 4 of 4

There are no dates on this site's pages. You do not know if the information is current.

Institute for a Healthier Heart
"Helping families live healthier lives since 2015"

Healthy Living | Shop

Blood Pressure Cholesterol Heart Disease Children & Heart Health

Latest Heart News

-  Treating Sleep Apnea Reduces Heart Disease Deaths
[Read more >>](#)
-  Low-Level Jobs Linked with Faster, Less Variable Heart Rates - and Higher Heart Risk
[Read more >>](#)
-  Social Connections: Could Heartwarming Be Heart-Saving?
[Read more >>](#)
-  Enlarged Waist + Elevated Triglycerides = Heart Stroke Risks for Women
[Read more >>](#)

Learn how a **revolutionary new drug** can help your heart!

Join the Institute Now!

Name:

Email:

Zip Code:

Age:

[About this Site](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Contact Us](#)

The example on the Institute for a Healthier Heart site does not state the date of the information, only the date the organization itself was formed.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Privacy—Part 1 of 3

Maintaining your privacy is another important thing to remember. Some sites ask for you to "sign up" or "become a member." Before you do, look for a privacy policy to see how the site will use your personal information.

On this example website for Physicians Academy for Better Health there is a link to their Privacy Policy on every page.

Physicians Academy for Better Health

Diseases & Conditions
Diet & Nutrition
Exercise
Medication & Treatment

Genetics may explain why some people can lower their cholesterol by altering their diet and exercise habits while others who take similar measures do not see significant decreases.

A study comparing the cholesterol levels of twins with starkly different body types and exercise habits found that the twins showed the same response to high-fat or low-fat diets. This suggests that genetics may determine how a person's cholesterol responds to dietary or lifestyle changes. The study was in the July 2015 issue of the [American Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#).



What the Numbers Mean

Cholesterol levels are measured in milligrams (mg) of cholesterol per deciliter (dl) of blood.

Total Cholesterol Level	Category
Less than 200 mg/dL	Desirable
200-239 mg/dL	Borderline High
240 mg/dL and above	High

Source: NHLBI

Sign up

for our newsletter.

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About Us
Privacy Policy
Site Map
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The example on the Physicians Academy for Better Health site clearly provides a link to their privacy policy in the footer area of their site.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Privacy—Part 1 of 3

On this site, users can sign up for an e-mail newsletter. This requires that you share your name and e-mail address.

The Privacy Policy explains how this information will be used. It will not be shared with outside organizations.

Only sign up for the newsletter if you are comfortable with how your information will be used.

Physicians Academy for Better Health

[Diseases & Conditions](#) [Diet & Nutrition](#) [Exercise](#) [Medication & Treatment](#)

Privacy Policy

Protecting your privacy is important to us. We do not collect personal information about you when you visit our Web site unless you choose to provide that information to us. We track the number of visitors to the various sections of our site and use this to identify system performance.

Personally Provided Information

If you choose to provide us with personal information by sending an email or subscribing to our newsletter, we will use this information to respond to your message and to provide you with the material that you request. If provided, personally identifiable information is maintained in a database that is regularly purged. We do not give, share, sell, or transfer any personal information to a third party unless required by law.

Cookies

A "cookie" is a small file stored on your hard disk allowing our system to remember information about your session. We use cookies to enhance your experience. When you encounter a page that employs temporary cookies to make it easier to use the site's dynamic features. The cookie and the information about your session will be destroyed shortly after you close your browser. If you choose not to receive cookies, you will still be able to use our site, but will be unable to use cookie-dependent features.

“If you choose to provide us with personal information by sending an email or subscribing to our newsletter...”

“We do not give, share, sell, or transfer any personal information to a third party unless required by law.”

[About Us](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Site Map](#) [Email Us](#)

Physicians Academy for Better Health
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Information Last Reviewed 1/15/2017

This example they indicate that it is your choice to provide your personal information along with stating what they will not do with your information.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Privacy—Part 2 of 3

On the other example website for the Institute for a Healthier Heart, there is also a Privacy Policy available.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Institute for a Healthier Heart. The header includes the organization's logo (a heart with an ECG line), the name "Institute for a Healthier Heart", and the tagline "Helping families live healthier lives since 2015". Navigation links for "Blood Pressure", "Cholesterol", "Heart Disease", and "Children & Heart Health" are visible. A "Latest Heart News" section features four articles with "Read more >>" links. A "Join the Institute Now!" form is present on the right. At the bottom, a navigation bar contains links for "About this Site", "Privacy Policy" (highlighted with a red box), and "Contact Us".

In this example, they make the link to their Privacy Policy clearly visible.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Privacy—Part 2 of 3

The Institute collects information about everyone who visits their Web site.

Institute for a Healthier Heart
"Helping families live healthier lives since 2015"

Healthy Living | Shop

Blood Pressure Cholesterol Heart Disease Children & Heart Health

Privacy Policy

The Institute for a Healthier Heart is committed to protecting your privacy online. This notice explains what information about you is collected on our site and how we will use it. By using this site you agree to the terms of this privacy policy.

While you browse the site, we will collect certain information about you. This information includes which Internet browser you are using, your IP address, and the URL of the Web site you visited before coming to the Institute's Web site. We may also use "cookies" that are erased once you exit your browser. We may use this information to improve our site and to enhance the regular operations of the Institute.

If you provide personally identifiable information to us, we may combine it with the other information passively collected. This information may be shared with the sponsors of this Web site or with carefully-screened third parties as necessary for the operation of the Institute for a Healthier Heart. In order to keep your personal information secure, we maintain our servers in a secure environment. We take steps to protect your information from unauthorized access or alteration.

About this Site Privacy Policy Contact Us

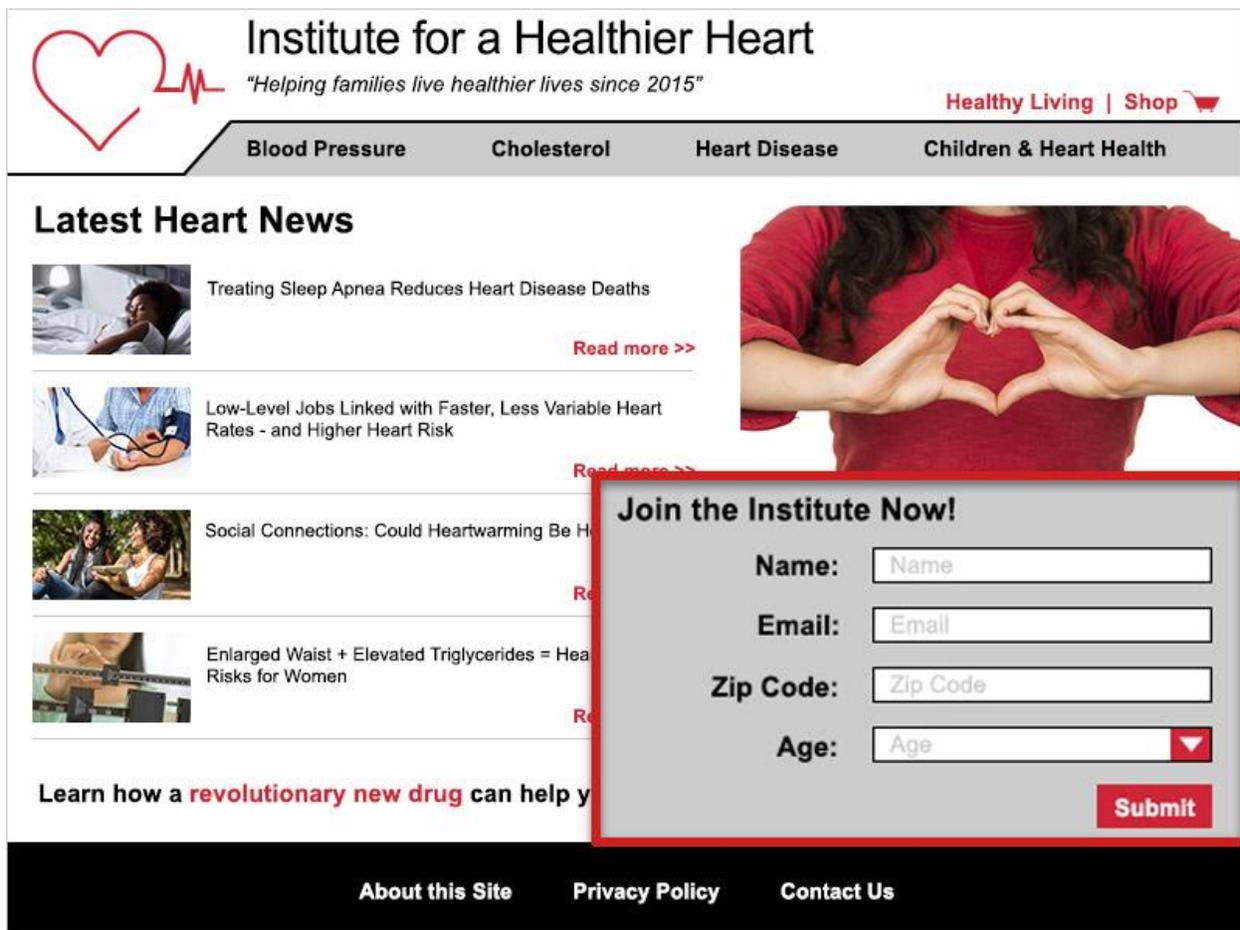
In this example, they indicate that they are passively collecting information on your visit, though initially it is not personally identifiable to you specifically.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Privacy—Part 3 of 3

This site promotes a "membership" option. You can sign up to join the Institute and receive special offers.

And as you saw earlier, a store on this site allows you to buy products.

If you do either of these, you will be giving the Institute your personal information.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Institute for a Healthier Heart. The header includes the logo (a heart with a pulse line), the name "Institute for a Healthier Heart", the tagline "Helping families live healthier lives since 2015", and a "Healthy Living | Shop" link with a shopping cart icon. Below the header is a navigation bar with categories: Blood Pressure, Cholesterol, Heart Disease, and Children & Heart Health.

The main content area features a "Latest Heart News" section with four articles, each with a thumbnail image and a "Read more >>" link:

- Treating Sleep Apnea Reduces Heart Disease Deaths
- Low-Level Jobs Linked with Faster, Less Variable Heart Rates - and Higher Heart Risk
- Social Connections: Could Heartwarming Be H...
- Enlarged Waist + Elevated Triglycerides = Hea... Risks for Women

Overlaid on the right side of the page is a "Join the Institute Now!" sign-up form. The form includes the following fields:

- Name:
- Email:
- Zip Code:
- Age: (with a dropdown arrow)

A red "Submit" button is located at the bottom right of the form. Below the form, the text "Learn how a revolutionary new drug can help y..." is partially visible.

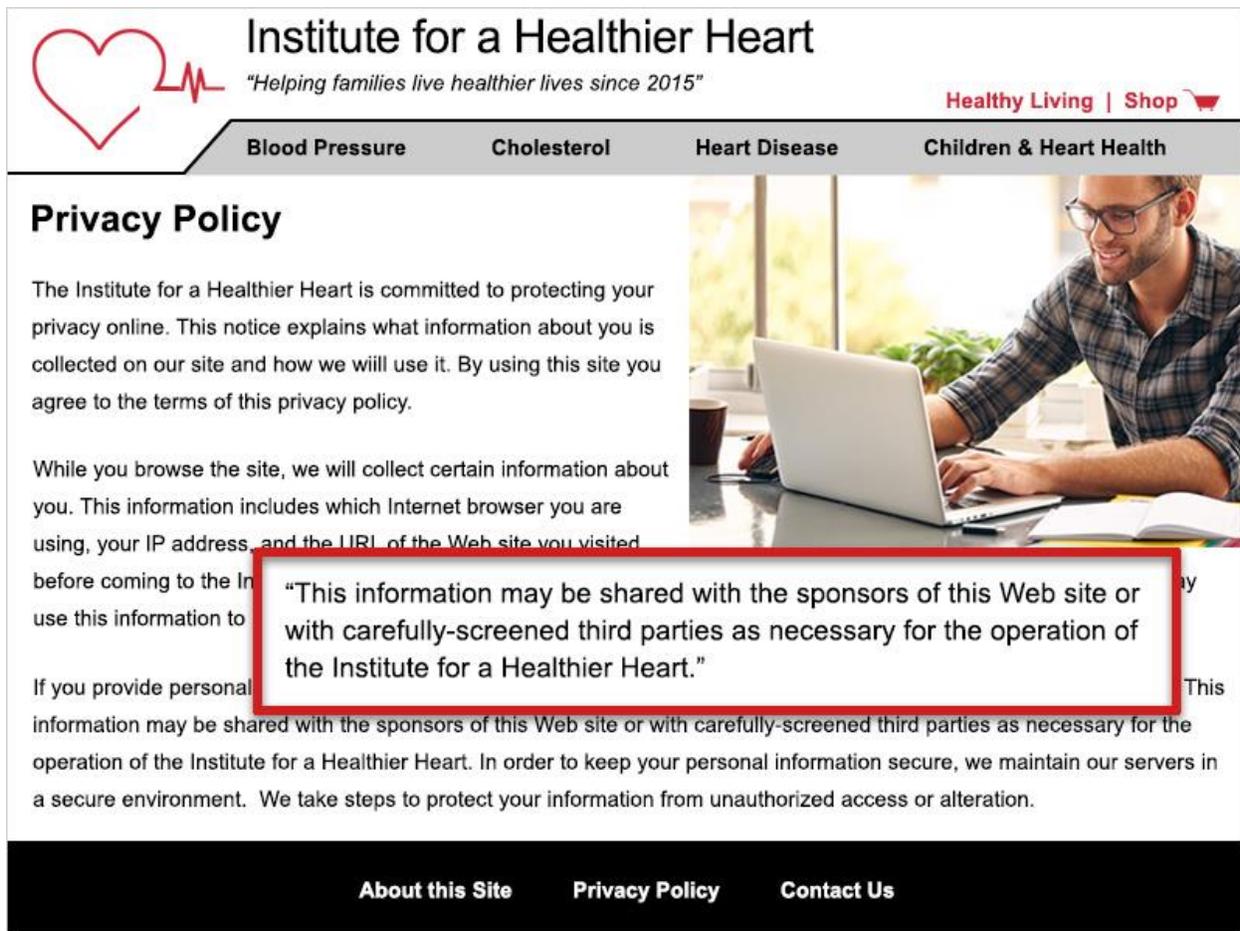
The footer contains three links: "About this Site", "Privacy Policy", and "Contact Us".

This example shows that your name, zip code and age are being requested. This type of information is personally identifiable to you.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Privacy—Part 3 of 3

From the Privacy Policy, you learn that your information will be shared with the company that sponsors the site. It may also be shared with others.

Only share your information if you are comfortable with how it will be used.



Institute for a Healthier Heart
"Helping families live healthier lives since 2015"

Healthy Living | Shop

Blood Pressure Cholesterol Heart Disease Children & Heart Health

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While you browse the site, we will collect certain information about you. This information includes which Internet browser you are using, your IP address, and the URL of the Web site you visited before coming to the Institute for a Healthier Heart. We will use this information to improve our site and to provide you with a better user experience.

If you provide personal information, this information may be shared with the sponsors of this Web site or with carefully-screened third parties as necessary for the operation of the Institute for a Healthier Heart. In order to keep your personal information secure, we maintain our servers in a secure environment. We take steps to protect your information from unauthorized access or alteration.

"This information may be shared with the sponsors of this Web site or with carefully-screened third parties as necessary for the operation of the Institute for a Healthier Heart."

About this Site Privacy Policy Contact Us

This example shows why reading the privacy policy is beneficial to you in determining the site's priorities.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Conclusion—Part 1 of 2

The Internet provides you with immediate access to health information. But you need to distinguish the good sites from the bad. Let's review the clues to quality by looking at our two fictional Web sites. The site for the Physicians Academy for Better Health:

- is run by experts
- has a clearly stated purpose
- labels advertising
- reviews information before posting it
- explains the sources of data and research
- is up-to-date and will not share personal information

Physicians Academy for Better Health

Diseases & Conditions
Diet & Nutrition
Exercise
Medication & Treatment

Genetics may explain why some people can lower their cholesterol by altering their diet and exercise habits while others who take similar measures do not see significant decreases.

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Source: NHLBI



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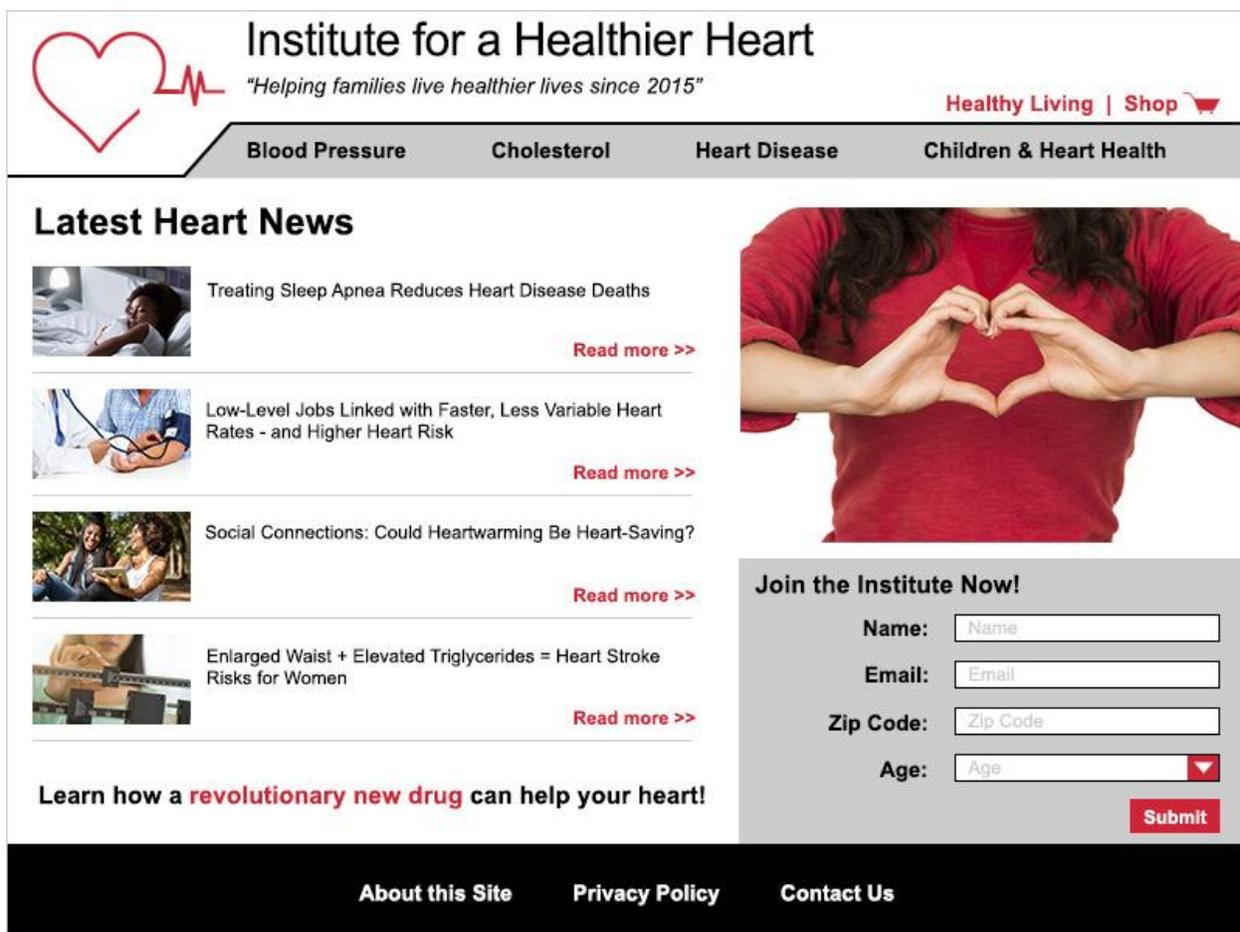
About Us
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The example of the Physicians Academy for Better Health home page shows a clearly laid out and important items clearly labeled for you to find the important information you need to decide on the quality of the site.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Conclusion—Part 1 of 2

The site for the Institute for a Healthier Heart:

- does not explain who is running it
- may favor its sponsor
- has an unclear purpose
- does not label advertising
- does not describe how information is added
- does not identify the sources of information
- does not tell how old the information is
- and might share your personal information with others



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Healthy Living | Shop

Blood Pressure Cholesterol Heart Disease Children & Heart Health

Latest Heart News

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-  Social Connections: Could Heartwarming Be Heart-Saving? [Read more >>](#)
-  Enlarged Waist + Elevated Triglycerides = Heart Stroke Risks for Women [Read more >>](#)

Learn how a **revolutionary new drug** can help your heart!

Join the Institute Now!

Name:

Email:

Zip Code:

Age:

[Submit](#)

[About this Site](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Contact Us](#)

The example of the Institute for a Healthier Heart home page shows that while it appears to be a good site at first, when you start looking further the information you need to verify the quality of the information on the site is not available.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Conclusion—Part 2 of 2

We compared two example websites in this tutorial, and the Physicians Academy for Better Health Web site is more likely to be a reliable source of information.

Physicians Academy for Better Health

Diseases & Conditions Diet & Nutrition Exercise Medication & Treatment

Genetics may explain why some people can lower their cholesterol by altering their diet and exercise habits while others who take similar measures do not see significant decreases.

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Information Last Reviewed 1/15/2017

While websites can look legitimate, taking the time to check things out about the site can help you decide if you can trust the information they provide.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: Conclusion—Part 2 of 2

Be sure to look for these clues as you search online. Your health could depend on it.

We have made a [checklist of questions to ask](#) when browsing Web sites.

Each question will lead you to clues about the quality of the information on the site. You will usually find the answers on the home page and in an "About Us" area.

Asking these questions will help you find quality Web sites. But there is no guarantee that the information is perfect.

Review several high-quality Web sites to see if similar information appears in more than one place. Looking at many good sites will also give you a wider view of a health issue.

And remember that online information is not a substitute for medical advice — consult a health professional before taking any of the advice that you have found online.

If you are looking for information to follow up on what your doctor has told you, share what you find with your doctor at your next visit.

Patient/provider partnerships lead to the best medical decisions.

For more details on how to evaluate health Web sites, visit the MedlinePlus page on [Evaluating Health Information](#)

This resource is provided to you by the [National Library of Medicine](#). We invite you to link to this tutorial from your Web site.